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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS FOR IO/UNESCO DOUGLAS ROHN, IO/S

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SUBJECT: UNESCO: Ambassador meets with DG to review US-UNESCO ties in wake of adoption of cultural diversity convention, presses for increased US staff

REFTELTEL: Paris 7446

11. Summary: The Ambassador's December 6 meeting with UNESCO DG Matsuura focused primarily on three topics: U.S. engagement with UNESCO in the wake of UNESCO's adoption in October of the cultural diversity convention; the importance of increasing the number of U.S. staff at UNESCO and including an American on the panel that will review UNESCO's science programs (REFTEL); and the need for improved handling of U.S. extra-budgetary contributions to UNESCO. End Summary.

Continued U.S. Engagement with UNESCO

12. The Ambassador opened the meeting by informing the DG that the atmosphere in Washington regarding UNESCO is very negative, and that Washington continues to be quite unhappy with both the substance of the Cultural Diversity convention and the process by which it was adopted at the October 2005 General Conference. Many in Washington are questioning whether the U.S. should stay involved with UNESCO. The Ambassador stressed serious USG concerns regarding follow-up meetings on cultural diversity that are taking place in various countries; she noted that many of the meetings are not UNESCO meetings per se. Cultural diversity has become a new intellectual force in the international arena, the Ambassador observed; we are already seeing many references to it at UNGA. The Ambassador reminded the DG of his pledge to intervene publicly to stop the misuse of the convention if that occurs. (Comment: We must follow closely UNESCO's involvement with these regional and national meetings. End Comment).

13. The Ambassador told the DG that Washington is willing, for the moment, to maintain an active U.S. engagement with UNESCO. However, she cautioned, the situation is very delicate. Further objectionable developments at UNESCO would make it difficult, if not impossible, to explain to Congress why we should stay involved with UNESCO. The DG responded that he understood perfectly and was pleased that we would be able to continue to work together. He added that U.S. involvement on Israeli-Palestinian issues at UNESCO was particularly critical, and that UNESCO could not have made the progress it has without the U.S. He mentioned that the new Palestinian representative has arrived and is hopeful that we will be able to continue the success that UNESCO has had in that area for the past two years.

Personnel Issues: More American, Please

14. Regarding staff positions at the UNESCO secretariat, the Ambassador and the DG discussed six key slots:

15. Assistant Director General, Culture Sector: The DG told the Ambassador that he had agreed with the suggestion that current Assistant Director General for Culture Bouchenaki stay for another year, and had tried to persuade him to do that. Bouchenaki was unable to do so because of pressure from ICROM, where he will be the new director, but agreed to stay until this end of February and to help choose a new Culture ADG.

16. The Ambassador expressed deep concern at rumors that Francoise Riviere (Assistant Director General in the Director General's Office) is one the leading candidates for the ADG's job. The Ambassador stressed that Riviere represents an over-represented country (France); in addition, given the serious issues relating to the Cultural Diversity convention, the U.S. would be unable to support any candidate that came from a country that was one of the main proponents of the convention. For similar reasons, the U.S. would also have concerns with any other internal candidate. The Ambassador emphasized the fact that, given the area of responsibility of the ADG for Culture, the U.S. would be watching the recruitment of that position very closely. A decision on that position that posed problems for the U.S. might have a very negative impact on U.S. engagement with UNESCO. The Ambassador also probed the DG on his plans for the Deputy position in the Culture Sector, and whether he would wait until choosing a new ADG before

filling that position. The Ambassador concluded by noting reports that a French national is currently in the process of drafting a major report on cultural diversity similar to the recently released UNESCO "knowledge societies" report, stressing that we view that as a potential cause of concern as well.

17. The DG responded that Riviere is not the French government's candidate, and that the French government might actually want her to go elsewhere. (Comment: Two seemingly contradictory statements. End comment.) The DG also reported that the French ambassador had been in to see him to complain that the number of high-level French nationals at UNESCO is declining. The Ambassador responded that a French national had just been elected as UNESCO's new external auditor. Regarding the Deputy ADG for Culture slot, the DG told the Ambassador that since Arts and Culture Enterprises Division Director is leaving, there is no one who could serve as Acting ADG. Although this job has not yet been advertised, he indicated that it might be soon. The DG was unclear as to his plan for the position. He did not seem to know much about the cultural diversity report that the Ambassador had queried him on.

18. P5 for Capacity Building, Natural Sciences Sector: The DG reported that he has decided to re-advertise that position because the last recruitment process was flawed; candidates were interviewed for a job that was different from the one advertised. The DG emphasized that some strong candidates had applied in the last round; if the U.S. is interested in this position, applications should be encouraged from outstanding candidates. The Ambassador underlined our strong interest and our determination to recruit qualified U.S. candidates.

19. Director, Division of Human Rights, Social and Human Sciences Sector: The Ambassador asked the DG whether that position would be filled before the completion of the review of the Natural Science and Social and Human Sciences Sectors (REFTEL). The DG responded that it would be filled, given the importance of the subject area. The Ambassador stressed very high-level Washington interest in recruitment for that position, and expressed the hope that qualified American candidates are being seriously considered.

10. P5 position for Democracy, Communications and Information Sector: The Ambassador told the Director General that we understand that a P5 position in democracy is being recruited internally and that a French national is the preferred candidate. She noted that this position is also very important to the U.S. and that we would like to see an external recruitment for it. The Director General was not familiar with this recruitment situation, but said he would look into it. He remarked that he had greatly increased the number of positions being recruited externally, resulting in his being criticized by the staff unions who say that this is having a bad effect on staff morale. The DG also noted that overall French representation at UNESCO in fact remains stable when French candidates are successful in internal recruitments.

11. P3 position for bioethics, Social and Human Services: The DG mentioned that the secretariat is considering hiring a professor from an American university to fill this slot.

COMPOSITION OF UNESCO SCIENCES REVIEW PANEL

12. When asked about the timing and composition of the expert panel that will review the Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences sectors (REFTEL), the DG said that he had asked the six geographical groups to submit at least three or four names, and that he would choose two from each group. He also intends to ask six members of the Secretariat to serve. He indicated that a choice would be

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made soon. The Ambassador stressed the importance of U.S. representation on the panel and the DG said that he was very aware of U.S. interest. The Ambassador queried the DG on reports that Natural Sciences ADG Erdelen might be leaving. The DG responded that he had given short-term appointments to both Erdelen and to SHS ADG Sane pending the results of the review. He said they were both very unhappy about that. When the discussion on personnel issues concluded, the DG said that he was very happy with Education ADG Peter Smith and with External Relations Deputy ADG Jim Kulikowski, as well as with Budget Deputy Director Rock Huang. He said that these Americans were excellent to work with and were making very positive contributions to UNESCO.

13. Comment: The Ambassador did not raise the issue of the new director of UNESCO's New York office because that decision had apparently already been made; she focused instead on future appointments still under consideration. End Comment.

Extra-budgetary Funding Issues

14. The Ambassador expressed concern at the laggard pace at which \$158,000 of the U.S. 2004 extra-budgetary funds (ICSECA) had been disbursed from the Secretariat. The Ambassador reported that she had raised this issue in February 2005 with ADG Erdelen with regard to the portion earmarked for the enhancement of engineering in the Natural Sciences Sector; the situation is still in the process of being resolved. The Ambassador stressed that the process would need to be clarified before more extra-budgetary funds could be given to UNESCO. The Ambassador reported that Washington was working with members of the Secretariat, and that she hoped to send him a letter soon outlining a fund-in-trust agreement. The Ambassador expressed the hope that the DG would support whatever we suggested in that letter. The Director General at first thought the DG was talking about the 2003 Special Account; when the Ambassador offered clarification, he said that he was not pleased and said that this program must be resolved as soon as possible and that he looked forward to receiving the Ambassador's letter.

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